

Inventory No.

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic

other 626 Great Falls Road

2. Location

street and number 626 Great Falls Road not for publication

city, town Rockville vicinity

county Montgomery

3. Owner of Property

name	Rockville MD Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses
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street and number	624 Great Falls Road	telephone
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city, town	Rockville	state	MD	zip code	20850
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4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.	Montgomery County Judicial Center	liber 13195	folio 351
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city, town Rockville tax map GR22 tax parcel P987 tax ID number 00147835

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

_____ Contributing Resource in National Register District
 _____ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
 _____ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
 _____ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
 _____ Recorded by HABS/HAER
 _____ Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT
 _____ Other:

6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count
_____ district	_____ public	_____ agriculture	Contributing
<u> x </u> building(s)	<u> x </u> private	_____ landscape	Noncontributing
_____ structure	_____ both	_____ commerce/trade	<u> 2 </u>
_____ site		_____ recreation/culture	_____ buildings
_____ object		_____ religion	_____ sites
		_____ social	_____ structures
		<u> x </u> domestic	_____ objects
		_____ education	_____ Total
		_____ funerary	
		_____ government	
		_____ unknown	
		_____ health care	
		_____ vacant/not in use	
		_____ other:	
			Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory
			<u> 0 </u>

7. Description

Inventory No.

Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

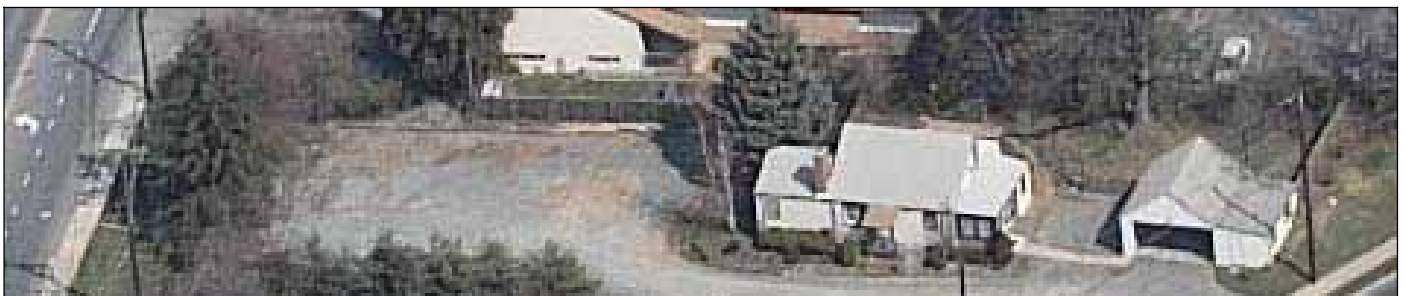
The 1951 brick and frame house with concrete block garage at 626 Great Falls Road is a mid 20th - Century one and a half story side-gabled rectangular house with a basement. There are small additions on each end of the building and a detached concrete block garage on the Maryland Avenue side. Although the street address for the site is on Great Falls Road, the property is accessed by car only via Maryland Avenue. It is typical of post-WWII compact houses known stylistically as "Cape Cod" dwellings - a side gabled main block with an attic dormer and side porches or sunrooms. The style was a common type built in new subdivisions in the later 1940s and 1950s in Rockville, as well as in the United States. The massing of this structure is intact, but the porch, exterior cladding and main block windows have been replaced.

The small 1951 house is not oriented to a street. The classic "front" faces south. The limited view from Great Falls Road is to a one-story end-gabled room addition on the west façade. The lower half of the addition is clad with brick, the upper is frame clad with vinyl siding. The view from Maryland Avenue is a one-story garage/workshop and a one-story sun porch on the house's east façade. The rear or north façade is not accessible to the public view. It has an exterior staircase to the basement and a plain brick chimney on the rear roof slope. The house is 1,413 square feet not including the basement area.

The main block of house was clad with stucco according to the older tax records and aerial photos, but it was re clad with vinyl siding after purchase by the Jehovah's Witnesses congregation in 1995 and several other alterations were done to update the house. The windows have been replaced with undersized 1/1 vinyl windows that were made to fit with infill panels at the top and bottom. The depth of the wall around the windows illustrates the successive layers of siding and stucco.

A front-gabled concrete block garage with a shed addition on the east façade is located next to Maryland Avenue. It has steel awning casement windows on three sides and was probably used as a workshop as well. The integrity of the garage is much higher than the house itself.

The property has been utilized by the adjacent owner for housing and informal overflow parking and the former lawn has been replaced with gravel. The house and garage are to be demolished and the lot utilized for parking by the Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses at 624 Great Falls Road.



626 Great Falls Road: Site and South (front) façade

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626 Great Falls Road

Washington Congregation of Jevovah's Witnesses



626 Great Falls Road – west façade showing room addition and south (front) facade



626 Great Falls Road- east façade showing shallow hipped roof sun porch and rear addition and south (front) façade.

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Rear (north) facade of 626 Great Falls Rd



Window detail of 626 Great Falls Road,
west facade



Garage/Workshop showing steel awning windows



Garage/Workshop showing steel awning
windows and door to shed additions

8. Significance Inventory No.

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Local history

Specific dates 1951

Architect/Builder

Construction dates 1951

Evaluation for:

☐ National Register

☐ Maryland Register

☐ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

Statement of Significance

The house at 626 Great Falls Road is evidence of the Post-WWII demand for housing in Rockville. This 1951 house was built more than 100 years after a free African American woman named Ann Willson purchased one acre of land at 600-602 Great Falls Road and made it her home and a small kinship community. The number of homes and the acreage grew with each generation as family members and other African Americans built in this area as well. The lower four acres of land were owned by a white citizen and landowner. The 1891 subdivision of Rockville Heights was platted around the black community and the four acre parcel, which accounts for the difference in lot size and regularity of shape between it and the surrounding area. The character of the area has changed with the purchase of several of the larger parcels of land between Great Falls Road and Maryland Avenue for institutional use. The agricultural land of Rose Hill Farm is now a residential development. Several houses dating from the first quarter of the 20th Century remain on their generous lots in the 600 block of Falls Road.

History and Support

In 1845, Jesse Leach sold one acre of land on the east side of Falls Road to Ann Willson, "A free coloured woman", for \$25.00. ¹ The price reflects the existence of a house originally located on this site. Ann Willson was listed as age 40 in the 1850 Census, one of 1,311 free blacks in Montgomery County at that time. At some unknown date she married a Mr. Davis and acquired the several Davis step-children whose names appeared in her Will and land transactions.²

¹ Montgomery County Land Records, JGH 2/151, made 1845, recorded 1853. Jesse Leach was a merchant, newspaper publisher, and Deacon in the Baptist Church of Rockville.

² Ann Willson may have been the widow of George Willson who was listed with her in the 1850 Census, and in 1853 was listed as owner of an improved lot valued at \$80. The name Davis is assumed through the step-children, who were ex-slaves according to the 1867-68 Census of ex-slaves and former owners. If her husband were a slave at the time of their marriage, the union would not have been recognized in legal or civil records. This may account for her continued use of the Willson name.

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Additional acreage was purchased by the family: parts of "Exchange and New Exchange" and "Sweepstakes" which abutted the east side of the small African American settlement.

The 1865 Martinet & Bond Map, pictured on the left, shows five structures at this site, identified as "cold".

In the Tax Assessment records for 1866, Ann Willson Davis and her step-daughter Elizabeth Davis owned houses

valued at \$150 each. The same year niece Eliza Ann Davis married William H. Johnson.³ Ann Davis deeded a quarter-acre lot to the couple in 1871. By the turn of the century, Eliza and William Johnson had purchased several acres of property.⁴ Fourteen acres of the "Sweepstakes" land were acquired by the white carpenter/undertaker William R. Pumphrey in 1911 from one member of the Johnson family; this transfer may have been partly in exchange for the construction of a new house erected ca. 1913 on the site of the pre-1845 Ann Willson house at 602 Great Falls Road.⁵ This early African American settlement was on Great Falls Road below the present Monument Street.

The land to the south of the black community was owned by a white Rockville citizen, W.H. Trail by 1917⁶ and was undeveloped. Mr. Trail owned a farm across Great Falls Road and other properties in the Rockville area. No house was shown on the 1917 Deets and Maddox Map of Montgomery County or on the later 1949 Klinge Atlas of Montgomery County at the 626 Great Falls Road location.

Although this area on the outskirts of Rockville was still one of large farms and rural character, the land on two sides of the tiny community had been platted into large lots for the largely unsuccessful "Rockville Heights" subdivision in 1890. Some remnants of Rockville Heights remain in the street names and location of Monument and Maryland. New Mark Commons across Maryland Avenue was built on resubdivided unimproved lots, parkland, abandoned New York and Florida Avenues as shown on the Rockville Heights subdivision plat.

3. The Davis-Johnson genealogy has been pieced together from available marriage and burial records, Land and Will records, and interviews with descendants of the families.

4. The original "Ann Willson" house passed from William Davis to his son John T. Davis, and was purchased by Eliza Johnson in 1901. The Nugent House at 602 Falls Road was constructed on land deeded by Eliza to the Nugents in 1909.

5. The 1917 Deets & Maddox Real Estate Atlas shows W. R. Pumphrey land received from Annie Johnson in 1911. The Tax Assessment office documents the appearance of a new house here in 1913.

6. 1917 Deets and Maddox Map of Montgomery County. Volume Two.

Maryland Historical Trust

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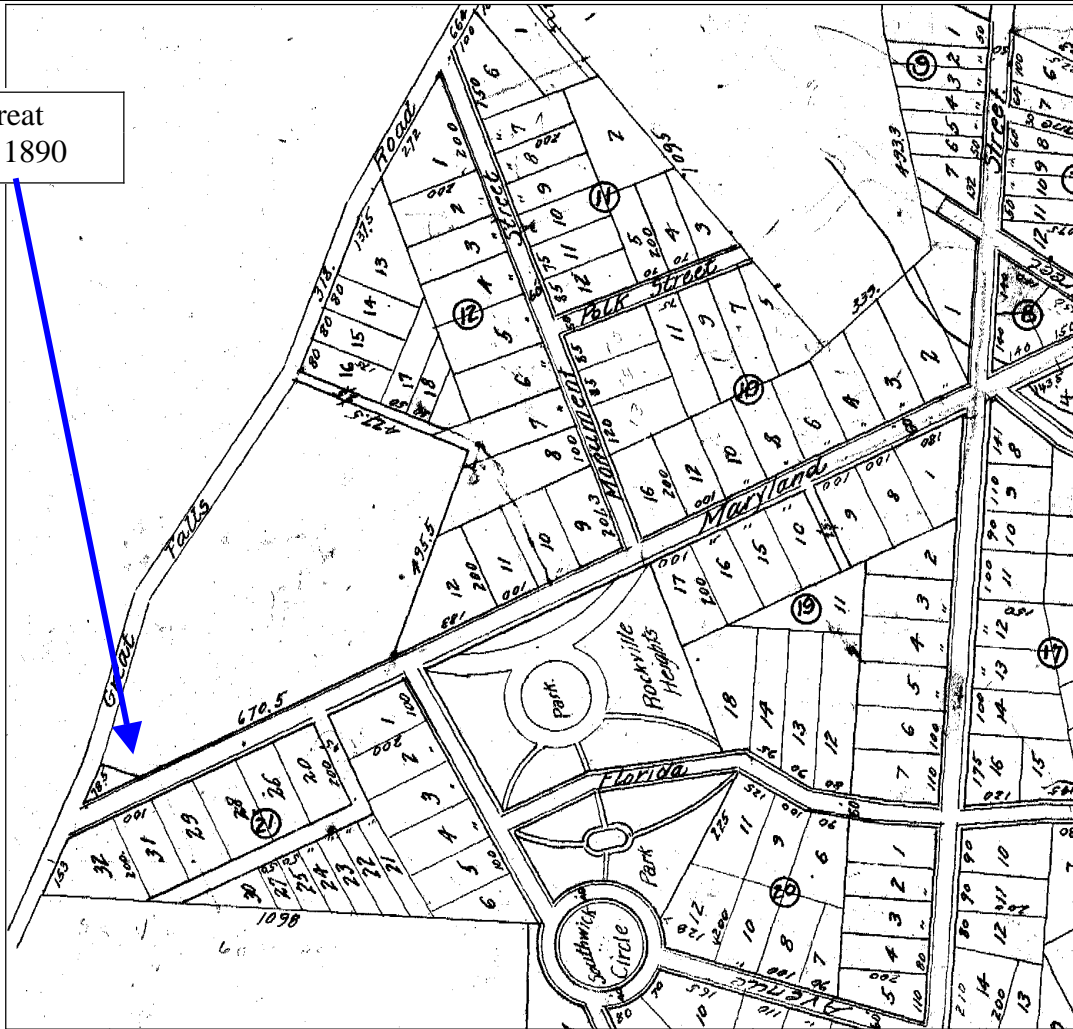
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Site of 626 Great
Falls Road in 1890



Detail from plat entered into the land records as Rockville Heights at Liber JA19, folio 285, surveyed in 1889-1890. The African American Community on Great Falls Road and the Trail property is shown as a blank space surrounded by the platted lots of Rockville Heights.

Most of the Rockville Heights lots remained vacant well into the 20th Century. Maryland Avenue, Argyle Avenue, and Monument Street were created by this subdivision. Other rights of way, Polk Street, Florida and New York Avenues were later abandoned.

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Detail from 1949 F.H.M. Klinge Atlas of Property in Montgomery County Maryland showing Rose Hill Farm, Rockville Heights, and the Great Falls Road Black Community/ Trail property south of it between Maryland Avenue and Great Falls Roads. Note that the Trail heirs have another 25-acre parcel on the right side of Great Falls Road.

The lot that became 626 Great Falls Road was owned by a C. Mearson when the property was entered into the City of Rockville water and sewer utilities account files. It was .5784 acres at that time. The utilities account file card shows that the property was purchased by Jessie W. and B.R. James in 1958.⁷ The property area was altered to .5354 acres, probably due to a taking for road improvements. No information is known or can be found concerning the Mearson or James ownership.

The James' sold the property to the Rockville Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in 1995.⁸ The Witnesses Congregation made a number of improvements to the house after its purchase. It also used the property for temporary overflow parking. Concept plans were recently submitted to demolish the house and pave the lot for a permanent parking area.

⁷ Montgomery County Land Record 2376/404 for .49 acre of land to J.W. and B.R. James

⁸ Montgomery County Land Record 13195/ 351, from J.W. and B.R. James to the Washington Conference of Jehovah's Witnesses for \$172,000.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. _____

MHT Forms for 600 and 602 Great Falls Road by Eileen McGuckian and Judy Christensen. City of Rockville Utility Service Records through 1984, Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation records, Montgomery County Plat and Land records, 1917 Deets and Maddox Map of Montgomery County, 1949 and 1959 F.H.M. Klinge Atlas of Real Estate in Montgomery County Maryland.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 21,344 square feet

Acreage of historical setting _____

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale: _____

Verbal boundary description and justification

Exchange and New Exchange, Tax Map GR22, P987.

11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Judy Christensen		
organization	City of Rockville, MD	date	February 7, 2005
street & number	111 Maryland Avenue	telephone	240-314-8232
city or town	Rockville	state	MD

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600